

AP Language and Composition Syllabus

Introduction to the Course

“An AP course in English Language and Composition engages students in becoming skilled readers of prose written in a variety of rhetorical contexts, and in becoming skilled writers who compose for a variety of purposes. Both their writing and their reading should make students aware of the interactions among a writer’s purposes, audience expectations, and subjects as well as the way generic conventions and the resources of language contribute to effectiveness in writing.”

Throughout the course, we will be working at a level equivalent to that of a first year college level course. Completion of the course and an acceptable score on the AP exam give the students the opportunity to receive college credit. The readings in this course come from a variety of time periods, stressing rhetoric and non-fiction. This course, while not required, does fulfill the 11th or 12th grade English requirement.

Goals

- To read and analyze non-fiction rhetorical works from various time periods
- To synthesize essays, short works, speeches, pictures, letters, novels, and other writing samples focusing on specific words used by the authors
- To develop expository, analytical, and argumentative writing
- To demonstrate awareness and purpose in selected readings
- To let content, purpose, and audience be the center of writing rather than the standard five paragraph essay
- To develop an awareness of the author’s intent
- To utilize the revision process (peer and teacher editing) to recognize strengths and weaknesses in one’s own writing
- To identify a thesis or claim, tone or attitude, author purpose, audience and occasion, and evidence or data within selected readings and sources
- To define and identify examples of logos, ethos, and pathos
- To evaluate the legitimacy of resources used in research
- To identify organizational patterns in text and relationships of facts (cause/effect, extended definitions, problem/solution, etc.)
- To effectively use rhetoric, tone, voice, and diction in written and spoken words

Essential Questions

- How does rhetoric influence our daily lives?
- How does a close reading and analysis of a work enable us to appreciate its content and understand its purpose?
- How does word selection alter the interpretation of works?
- How does understanding the life of another enable us to live our lives more fully?

Required Texts

The Language of Composition by Shea, Scanlon, and Aufses

The Pocket Wadsworth Handbook by Kirsznner and Mandell
One Hundred Great Essays by Robert Diyanni
An American Childhood by Annie Dillard
The Color of Water by James McBride
Writing the Synthesis Essay by Brassil, Coker, and Glover
One self selected biographical or non-fiction novel

Online resources

www.americanrhetoric.com

Elements of this course

- Preparation for the AP Language and Composition exam
- Timed essays based on AP prompts
- Reading/responding to/analyzing non-fiction in various forms (essays, speeches, biographies, news reports, histories, photos, etc.)
- Weekly journal writings, forums, and blogs in response texts and current events
- Synthesis essays – narrative, expository, analytical, and argumentative
- Writer’s workshops with self, peer, and teacher editing
- Improvement of research skills for evaluating sources, using information in the synthesis essay
- Advanced vocabulary used effectively in speaking and writing

Grading Scale

Percentage	Grade	Content
93% - 100%	A	Sophisticated
85% - 92%	B	Knowledgeable
77% - 84%	C	Sufficient
70% - 76%	D	Insufficient
0% - 69%	F	Unacceptable

Course Overview

Each day, students will begin with a bell ringer focused on vocabulary, grammar, or writing that connects previous days to current day or introduces a concept we will cover in class. Students can expect to write daily using individual journals, circle writing, blogs, and forums. Each week will consist of a common theme for the short readings which links to the themes of the larger readings. Quizzes will occur to check reading progress and basic understanding, tests will occur at the end of larger reading or multiple short readings plus at the end of units. There will be two formal writings per unit where students will construct multiple drafts using writing workshops to edit and revise. Shorter writings (daily response journals, blogs, forums, etc.) will be kept electronically using Moodle. Students will be required to post in their journals and on the blogs with each section of reading.

Course Schedule

Summer reading

- *An American Childhood* by Annie Dillard
- Weekly journal of current events – one local or state, one national or international
 - Expectations
 - Write weekly journals uploaded to the Moodle blog about events as they occur.
 - Respond to peers and teachers forum posts regarding novel and current events.
 - Upon returning to school, develop a narrative essay describing an experience or personal response to an event in own life or in the news.

Unit One: Introduction to the course, rhetoric, synthesis, and non-fiction
(Late August thru November 6)

During the first few days of school, students will immerse themselves into the language of rhetoric focusing on ethos, pathos, and logos; diction and syntax; and source analysis using *The Language of Composition*. The course opens with assignments related to the Summer Reading, response journals, and blogs/forums. Writing activities in the summer will train them to start focusing audience, purpose, and strategies. To complete their first composition, they will utilize their journals, blogs/forums, and readings.

Selected readings:

- First three chapters in *The Language of Composition*
- Princess Diana's death – a series of four readings from *The Language of Composition* to practice close reading (supplemented with various pictures of Princess Diana throughout her royal life – hardships and joys)
- "Living Like Weasels" – short story by Annie Dillard in *One Hundred Great Essays*
- Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti case and executions - a series of works about the charges, trial, outcome, appeals, and aftermath including but not limited to:
 - Nicola Sacco's "Letter to His Son" in *One Hundred Great Essays*
 - Allen Ginsberg's "Sacco and Vanzetti must not die"
 - Carl Sandburg's "Legal Midnight Hour"
 - Edna St. Vincent Millay's "Justice Denied in Massachusetts"
 - William Carlos Williams' "Impromptu: The Suckers"
 - Amy Goodman & Juan González' Article in Democracy Now from 08/27/07 "Sacco and Vanzetti: 80 Years After Their Execution, A Look At The Men, the Murders, and the Judgment of Mankind"
 - Governor Michael Dukakis' proclamation in 1977 of the Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti Memorial Day.
 - Various researched sources about the events.

- One self-selected theme (work, community or sports) from *The Language of Composition*

Writing Assignments:

- For Summer Readings – Narrative Essay
- For Nicola Sacco and Bartolomeo Vanzetti case – Argumentative Essay
- For current events (ongoing) – Expository writings (formal and informal)
- Analytical writings unit reading from textbook

Unit Two: Our Multicultural & Gender History – Past to Present

(November 7 thru January 17)

Selected Readings:

- James McBride's *The Color of Water*
- James McBride's "Shul/School"
- James Baldwin's "Notes of a Native Son" in *One Hundred Great Essays*
- Sojourner Truth's "Ain't I a Woman" in *One Hundred Great Essays*
- Martin Luther King, Jr's various speeches found on www.americanrhetoric.com
- Elie Weisel's "The Perils of Indifference" found on www.americanrhetoric.com
- Jonathan Swift's "A Modest Proposal" in *One Hundred Great Essays*
- Richard Rodriguez's "Aria: A Memoir of a Bilingual Childhood"
- Anna Quindlen's "Between the Sexes, A Great Divide"
- Barry Lopez's "The Stone Horse"

Writing Assignments:

- Analytical essay on *The Color of Water*
 - Using research about the history of the time period, write an Analytical essay which establishes McBride's purpose of intertexting his mother's biography with his own to develop the theme of his novel.
- Narrative and Expository writings (formal and informal) on speeches and essays from the text

Mid Term Examination – a 90-minute exam take a two-part exam. Part 1 is Multiple Choice where students read new material and answer questions similar to those on the AP Language Exam. Part 2 is an in-class essay. Prompt will require rhetorical analysis, comparison/contrast, or argumentation.

Unit Three: Political Rhetoric and the Media

(January 22 thru March 26)

Selected Readings:

- Robert Kennedy's "Statement on Martin Luther King's Death"
- Abraham Lincoln's "The Gettysburg Address"

- Various political speeches as related to recent elections and international events. (Listening and reading on www.americanrhetoric.com)
- Movie directed by Davis Guggenheim – *Waiting for Superman*
- “Education” unit from *The Language of Composition*
- Billy Collins’ “The History Teacher”
- Plato’s “The Allegory of the Cave”

Writing Assignments:

- ***Synthesis Free Response Essay***

Introduction: President Kennedy’s assassination, the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Space Shuttle Challenger explosion, Oklahoma City bombing, Columbine, 9/11, Hurricane Katrina. Moments in history define us, whether we like to admit it or not. Many of us remember where we were, who we were with, and how we felt at that exact moment when time stood still, when the news of that event was broadcast through media outlets everywhere. In the hours and days that follow, we watch it all unfold in the news, taking in as much as our minds and hearts can handle. In the aftermath, we wonder how our lives will ever go back to normal. Or can they? How we react in the aftermath determines how our lives and culture will continue to be affected in the years to come. To what extent do we, either individually or as a society, fall victim to feelings of paranoia, cynicism, fear, or revenge? Is it possible to avoid any of the effects in the aftermath? What responsibility, if any, do the leaders in our households, communities, and nation to make sure this doesn’t happen?

Assignment: Read the following sources (including any introductory information) carefully. **Then, in an essay that synthesizes at least three of the sources for support, take a position that defends, challenges, or qualifies the claim that the response of our leaders with paranoia, cynicism, fear and revenge cause irrevocable damage to our culture.**

- Analytical Essay – response to the movie. After watching *Waiting for Superman*, research information about education in America. Where are we succeeding? Where are we falling short? Are our schools really failing? At what point in our nation’s history was education at its peak? What programs have helped improve education in America? In an analytical essay, determine what needs to be done to improve American education using various researched sources.

Unit Four: Contemporary icons in the Sports and Entertainment World (March 27 thru end of school year)

Selected Readings

- Michael Lewis’ “The Curse of Talent” followed by the viewing of the movie *Moneyball*
- Self selected biography/autobiography/memoir of a sports figure
- Reverend Al Sharpton’s eulogy for Michael Jackson
- Kevin Costner’s eulogy for Whitney Houston

- Comparing retirement speeches with Congressional hearing testimony for performance enhancing drugs. (Mark McGuire, Raphael Palmero, Roger Clemens, Barry Bonds, etc.)
- “Sports and Fitness” unit from *The Language of Composition*

Writing Assignments

- Narrative essay showing comparison and contrast on sports using self-selected material, “Sports and Fitness” unit in *The Language of Composition*, and movie *Moneyball*.
- Expository and Analytical responses to readings in *The Language of Composition*
- Documented Research Paper on one of the themes covered throughout the year. Choose a current event or well-known event which captures the theme. Using research from various resources and media, develop an argument about the topic in a well-written essay.

Final Exam

- The Final for the course will be a practice AP Language and Composition test. As per district policy, it counts at 10% of the final course grade.